

The Nature of RELIGIOUS ZEAL.

A

2

S E R M O N

On P H I L. iii. 6.

PREACHED at a

GENERAL SYNOD

HELD IN

A N T R I M,

JUNE the Eighteenth, 1745.

By JOHN CARLISLE, M. A.

B E L F A S T:

Printed by JAMES MAGEE, and sold by him and the other
Bookfellers in Town, as also by the Bookfellers of *Londonderry*,
Newry and *Armagh*. M,DCC,XLV. Price 4d.

OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH

ST. R. M. O. N.

ON THE HISTORY OF

RELIGIOUS TRUTH

GENERAL SYNOD

AND IN

THE HISTORY OF

THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH

BY JOHN C. KILPATRICK, M. A.

NEW YORK:

THE NEW YORK AMERICAN BOOK CONCERN, 1847.



T H E P R E F A C E.

TH^O I was warmly solicited by most of the Ministers at the General Synod, by some of the Gentlemen and Elders and others, to publish the following Sermon, they being of opinion that as the obvious Design of it was to recommend Peace, Meekness, and Moderation, in our whole Behaviour, it might by the Blessing of God do good in the World; yet I had not the least Intention of complying with their Desire, till an Incident happen'd which I judg'd made it necessary for me to do it, which was this; some few Ministers it seems were dissatisfied with some Expressions in the Discourse, and in an Interloquitur of the Synod desir'd that I might be ask'd to explain my self upon them; I, without insisting upon their not having spoken to me first in a private way according to the Gospel Rule, Mat. xviii. (which indeed one of them did, and own'd publicly in the Interloquitur that I at once satisfy'd him fully) desir'd them to point out the Passages at which they had taken Offence; accordingly they pointed at two or three, which I read over to them, and show'd them that they had mistaken my Meaning, and at the same time explain'd the Passages referr'd to (retaining still the obvious Sense and Sentiment contained in them) to their Satisfaction, as will plainly appear by the Minute of the Interloquitur taken upon that Occasion, and subscrib'd by the Moderator and Clerk of the Synod, which is as follows.

At

*At an INTERLOQUITUR of the GENERAL SYNOD
at Antrim, June 18th, 1745.*

SOME few Brethren who had taken Exceptions at some Expressions in Mr. Carlisle's Sermon, now desir'd that he wou'd satisfy them; they specify'd the Passages which they look'd on as offensive, and Mr. Carlisle condescended to read them, and gave such Explications of them, as were satisfying to those Brethren and to this Interloquitur.

Extracted by JOHN COCHRAN Clk. S. G.

JOHN MOOREHEAD Moderator.



A SER.



A
SERMON, &c.

PHIL. iii. 6. 2

Concerning Zeal, persecuting the Church.

IN these words we have St. Paul's description of his own character and behaviour before his conversion to the christian faith. And this plain and undisguis'd account which he here, and in other parallel texts of scripture, gives of his own temper and practice whilst a Jew, is no doubt intended to represent the evil and wickedness of such a behaviour, and to give an effectual dash and discouragement to blind bigotry and furious Zeal, in all who shou'd afterward read and consider this account.

IN the viiith and ixth chapters of the *Acts* of the Apostles we have the history at large of his outrageous proceedings; how he *made havock of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women*

women committed them to prison: how he breathed out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. And in *Acts* xxii. 4. *I persecuted*, says he, *this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women.* And in chap. xxvi. 10. *Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them, and I punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange cities.* *Gal. i. 13.* *Ye have heard, says he, of my conversation in times past in the Jews religion; how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it, being exceeding zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

HITHERTO we have seen St. Paul acting like an officer of the Inquisition; but when we take a view of him after his conversion to the christian faith, we shall hear him speak in a softer stile. He tells us *1 Cor. xv. 9.* *I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* He accuses himself as guilty of great crimes upon that account, and ranks himself among the chief of sinners, *1 Tim. i. 13.* *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

BUT lest we shou'd imagine (as some have vainly done) that St. Paul does not accuse himself for being of a persecuting spirit, but only because his Zeal was apply'd to a wrong object; that persecution is no fault but when employ'd against the true religion; and that cruel and inhuman methods may be made use of against false opinions, or a wrong way of worship, he has sufficiently explain'd himself, *2 Tim. ii. 24.* *The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle towards*

towards all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth. And tho' his Zeal was exceeding warm and strong, yet the mildness of its nature is most effectually demonstrated by his behaviour to his countrymen; he does not pray for power to destroy 'em, he calls for no fire from heaven to consume them, but in *Rom. ix. 3.* *He cou'd wish that himself were Anathema from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the Flesh.*

His example and exhortations run all in the same strain, breathing the warmest Zeal, but temper'd with meekness, humanity, and moderation, *1 Cor. ix. 22.* *To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things, to all men, that by all means, lawful and fit, to be sure, I might save some.* And in *Gal. vi. 1.* *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; bear ye one anothers burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

FROM this account of St. Paul's Zeal, both before and after his conversion, we may gather the nature both of a true and false Zeal. And since Zeal for religion has been the common pretence for all that quarrel and contention, that hatred and envy, that strife and division, which has almost in every age been the reproach of the christian name, I shall take occasion from these words to enquire more particularly into the nature of religious Zeal.

ZEAL therefore is not a particular grace or virtue by it self, but rather a qualification which shou'd accompany the exercise of every virtue, and the performance of every duty. Indeed 'tis no virtue at all unless it be well plac'd and regulat-
ed.

ed. Zeal in its general notion is nothing else but a strong and ardent affection and concern for or against any thing that a man values or dislikes, and a lively and vigorous manner of acting thereupon. 'Tis in some measure wrought into the temper and constitution of every man, and is the natural heat and fervor of the mind when 'tis very earnest in any pursuit. Zeal therefore, as all other passions, is either good or bad according to its object, and as 'tis under the conduct of reason or human corruption. It has the denomination of a religious Zeal, only as far as the objects about which 'tis conversant, are of a religious nature: and even a religious Zeal is no farther good and commendable, than when 'tis really on the side of truth and goodness; when 'tis measured by the importance of things; and when 'tis express'd and exercis'd by lawful and regular methods. 'Tis often spoken of in scripture in an evil sense, 'tis reckon'd among the works of the flesh, and often rank'd with the worst of company, as in *Gal. v. 20*. And in many other places: and yet right Zeal is a duty and a needful ingredient of the christian temper, an excellent instrument of religion, and of promoting the honour and interest of God in the world. *Gal. iv. 18*. *'Tis good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.* I shall therefore endeavour

I. To state the nature of true religious Zeal, which is the virtue of a christian; and under this head consider its object, its end, and the manner in which it expresses itself.

II. THE nature of false and misguided Zeal, which is the character of private parties and factions.

FIRST to state the nature of true religious Zeal, which is the virtue of a christian. Religion is the great ornament and glory of human nature; that which principally distinguishes men from the inferior orders of creatures, and upon which alone are grounded all hopes of Happiness hereafter, when this short and transitory life is at an end. Religion therefore is justly esteem'd by all wise and considerate men as a matter of the utmost importance to our well-being both now and for ever; and hence it comes to pass that they have always thought it fit to employ their greatest and warmest Zeal about it. But here great care must be taken that our Zeal be right and good, *i. e.* that the object of it, or what we are zealous for, is really truth or duty: and what we are zealous against is certainly false, or evil. Zeal for religion must be applied to these objects and to these only; it must be a hearty and warm inclination and endeavour to know the will of God, and to perform it when known, which alone is true religion. A zeal to know the truth, and to do our duty is a zeal for the glory of God in the truest sense.

THE object therefore of true christian Zeal is an impartial enquiry after truth, or the knowledge of the will of God, and the practice of virtue and piety; the continued unprejudic'd inquiring after the truth ourselves, and the giving constant encouragement and liberty to others to search for it after the same manner: the conforming our own practice to the unquestionable and unalterable rules of righteousness and piety, and using all just honorable and christian means with others likewise to do the same.

To explain this matter more particularly, let it be observed that zeal for searching after and disco-

yearing of truth can never possibly be excessive. *The price of wisdom, says Job, is above rubies; the topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Buy the truth, says Solomon, also wisdom, instruction, and understanding.* The like phrase is used by our Saviour in his advice to the church of *Laodicea*, *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire*, that is, to enquire diligently after the uncorrupted doctrines of the gospel, which will bear the trial of the most impartial examination; *anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see*, that is, lay aside blind prejudices and corrupt affections, which hinder men from discerning the truth, and search the scriptures with unbiass'd understanding, that in them you may find the words of eternal life.

THIS Zeal therefore for enquiring and searching after the truth, zeal to know perfectly the will of God, can never possibly be faulty in excess. All faultiness upon this head, is always, and only, upon the defective side, a want of Zeal, a carelessness and indifference in men, whether the things they profess to believe, be true or not. They receive things ignorantly and negligently at all adventures, they take the principles of their religion upon trust, from their parents and tutors, without being at all solicitous to know whether they be agreeable to right reason and the word of God; as if religion was nothing more than the custom of the country, or the fashion of the place they live in, or of the people they happen to be bred with; as if the right of private judgment, of every christian's judging for himself in matters of religion, were not the privilege and duty of every christian man as well as of the clergy; or as if any man could be ty'd up, or absolv'd, by the received

received rules or authoriz'd forms of doctrine of any church, from his duty and privilege of inquiring sincerely and impartially into the will of God as contained in the holy scriptures. Hence it comes to pass that tho' the doctrine of Christ is so plainly and clearly express'd in the gospel, yet what is vulgarly call'd christian religion, is at different times and in different places as different from it self, as light is from darkness; God having in great justice suffer'd men to entertain innumerable and incredible absurdities, because they *received not the truth, in the love thereof*, and according to the simplicity of the gospel. The first therefore and original cause of all corruptions in religion is want of Zeal for inquiring after the truth, a stupid indifference and carelessness whether what they pretend to believe be true or not, an implicit believing of the forms of doctrine received in the church in which they happen to be born and bred, without a sincere and impartial inquiry into the truth, and goodness of them. And tho' men shou'd then happen to be in the right, yet a blind and random Zeal, even for the truth it self, can't be acceptable to God; because 'tis by chance, and not upon reasonable evidence that their Zeal is upon the right side. Every man therefore is bound, before he gives a loose to his Zeal, to use the best helps in his power for discovering the truth; and no man shou'd suffer his Zeal to outrun his knowledge, or to exceed the evidence he has of the truth or falshood, of the good or evil of things.

BUT further, if we have never so much Zeal for enquiring after truth, and have never so much success in that inquiry, yet still even this is nothing without a religious life: and therefore, as I before observ'd, the principal, the proper object

of christian Zeal, is not only an impartial enquiry into the will of God, but also the sincere practice of virtue and righteousness, without which all our knowledge signifies nothing. *'Tis good*, says the apostle, *to be zealously affected always in a good thing* : and in his epistle to *Titus*, he declares, that *Christ gave himself for us, and redeem'd us to this very end that we might be a people zealous of good works*. If our inquiry after truth be not directed to practice, instead of procuring happiness, 'twill conduce to aggravate mens misery. Tho' Christ came to enlighten the world by the discovery of divine truth, yet that was only as a means to make men zealous of good works. That must be the centre where all our inquiries meet ; and a true religious Zeal is always warmest in its endeavours to practise religious duties when discover'd. By this therefore we may easily discern a genuine Zeal from a false fire, and spurious blaze. A man warm in his inquiry after, or defence of, the principles of religion, and cool in the practice of its duties, may be set to work by curiosity, pride, or vain glory, but can never be animated by a religious Zeal. Our blessed Lord pronounces him blessed that *hungers and thirsts after righteousness* ; and, describing his own practice, *my meat*, says he, *is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*.

THIS then, I think, is the proper notion of a true religious Zeal, with regard to the object about which 'tis employ'd ; 'tis a Zeal for the knowledge of truth and practice of righteousness, and this Zeal if it be not faulty in other respects, the degree of it can never be excessive.

2dly, I PROCEED to consider the manner in which a true religious Zeal expresses it self in prosecuti-

, on

on of its object; for be its object never so right, it may easily, if great care be not taken, degenerate into a vitious and unchristian Zeal. Wrath and fierceness, violence and hatred are ungodly practices, whether the object of a man's Zeal be good or bad. *Paul* was not only faulty for persecuting the christians when himself was a Jew, but he wou'd also have been equally faulty, if he had persecuted the Jews when he became a christian. The amiable character of the divine author of our religion is this, *Mat. xii. 18. Behold, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased, I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles; he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man bear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.*

AND when some of his own disciples, beginning to depart from this example, wou'd have call'd for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, *he rebuked 'em, saying, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* According to this great pattern, *St. Paul* directs that *the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; and he advises all christians to let their moderation be known unto all men; their moderation, i. e. not a lukewarmness or indifference in religion, but that meekness, calmness, and equitableness of spirit, which very well agrees with, and indeed usually accompanies the highest possible Zeal for truth and virtue.* The want of this spirit 'tis that the apostle complains of in the *Corinthians; whereas there are among you envyings and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men.*

No

No Zeal therefore for God and his glory, for his true church and religion, will justify the doing of that which is morally evil. *Will ye speak wickedly for God, or talk deceitfully for him?* we don't know what belongs to the honour of God and religion, if we think to promote his glory by means dishonorable and offensive to him. The apostle pronounces it a damnable sin for any to charge this doctrine upon christianity that evil may be done for a good end, and to promote the glory of God. *Rom* iii. 8. And yet what is more frequent than for men, out of a Zeal for God and religion, to overlook the evil and unlawfulness of the means they use for advancing so good an end? This is that which hath sanctify'd those refin'd arts of wickedness made use of by the church of *Rome* to this purpose. But the means must be proportion'd to the end. As the end is to bring men to the practice of true religion, so the means made use of to obtain that end, must be such as are agreeable to the rules of that same religion. Seeing therefore that mildness, meekness, compassion, charity, benevolence, and moderation, are virtues indispensably required by the christian law, it plainly follows, that a Zeal to propagate and promote that religion, carried on by anger, uncharitableness, calumny, or cruelty, cannot be a true Zeal for that religion, which strictly forbids the practice of these vices.

How right therefore soever the object of our Zeal be, yet if it be faulty and vicious in the manner in which 'tis exercised or expressed 'tis not a true christian Zeal; *the wrath of man will never work the righteousness of God.* *Ja.* i. 20. And he farther assures 'em that wars and fightings, i. e. hatred, animosity, and contention, can proceed
from

from nothing but from their lusts, that is, from corrupt passions, not from Zeal for true religion. And whosoever takes pleasure in calumniating and reproaching his brother, St. *John* tells us 'tis absurd and ridiculous for him to pretend he does it out of Zeal towards God: 1 *Jo.* iv. 20. *If a man say I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* 2

3dly, THE last particular by which a religious Zeal is distinguish'd from a human passion, and by which it becomes truly and properly a christian virtue, is the end or intention towards which 'tis directed. A Zeal for inquiring after truth may possibly be nothing but curiosity; and a Zeal for doing even what is right may sometimes proceed even from temporal views merely; but these are not the ends of a christian Zeal; its proper and ultimate end and intention, to which it is directed, is the glory and honour of God. By the honour and glory of God always remembering, that we mean not any thing imaginary and enthusiastic, which often turns religious Zeal into the worst of vices; but that thereby be constantly meant the promoting and establishing of Christ's kingdom of righteousness here, in truth, peace, and love, in order to the Salvation of mens souls hereafter in his eternal kingdom of glory.

TRUE christian Zeal then will dispose the soul to propose to it self as its end the bringing of honour to the name of God, by obeying his will, by devoting it self to his service, by attending and honouring his institutions, by wishing well to all men, by a circumspect and unblameable conversation, and by the shining light of a good example, that may provoke others with a pious emulation to glorifie God as we do. Such was the operation

ration of holy *David's* Zeal, he loved the salvation of God, and therefore was disposed himself, and was prompting others to say, *let the Lord be magnify'd*; the end of his Zeal was the honour of his God.

AND thus I have consider'd the nature of true religious Zeal. But as truth is but one and invariable, and error endless and infinite, so a false and misguided Zeal shews it self in various shapes and appearances. I shall therefore endeavour to state the nature of a false and mistaken Zeal, which may be easily done from its opposition to that which is truly christian.

AND 1st. 'tis a Zeal that is mistaken in its object, that calls *good evil, and evil good*; a Zeal for error and superstition, for mere forms and ceremonies, a Zeal for some imagin'd truth, never carefully examin'd whether it be really such; or for the private and distinguishing opinions of particular sects and parties; or for the very persons of men who happen to be had in admiration. If any of these seem to have even a remote relation to religion they are too easily mistaken for it, and then all that warm Zeal, which ought to be employ'd for the support of true religion only, is abus'd to maintain these.

To explain this by instances: *St. Paul* tells us, that the *Corinthians* were zealous, *some of them for Paul, some for Apollos, and some for Cephas*; and this their Zeal he tells 'em was *not spiritual but carnal*, that is, 'twas not for the religion of Christ, but for parties among men. Again, some (he tells us) *upon the foundation of Christ, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones, built wood, hay, stubble*, materials which cou'd not bear the test of the fire; the meaning is, they were zealous for opinions of
which

which they had never examin'd the truth or importance ; for doctrines which had no useful influence upon practice ; for forms and ceremonies which had no tendency to a virtuous life. The whole body of the *Jewish* nation in our Saviour's days were extreamly zealous for circumcision, and the law of *Moses*, but 'twas a Zeal without knowledge, and without careful examination, 'twas a Zeal for the ceremonial part of the law more than for the moral, for the traditions of the elders, and for the doctrines, each of their own particular sect and party, more than for the law of God. Now this abuse of Zeal arises naturally from neglecting the first fundamental rule of true Zeal, which requires us to make it our first care to know wherein true religion consists : for when men neglect the light which shou'd direct 'em, they are apt to be led aside by any wild blaze that shall offer it self to their sight, and are ready to measure truth and error not so much by the infallible standard of right reason and the word of God, as by the opinions and writings of men who have been eminent in their way.

2dly, THAT is a false and misguided Zeal, the degree whereof is manifestly disproportion'd to the good or evil of the things about which 'tis employ'd ; when there is in men a greater and fiercer Zeal about the externals of religion, than for the vital and essential parts of it ; for the traditions of men, than for the commandments of God ; for the means of religion, than for the end of it ; a greater Zeal against the omission or refusal of some unscriptural and superstitious practice, than against the practice of the grossest immoralities.

BOTH truth and duties we know admit of various degrees of importance ; some are absolutely
C necessary,

necessary, some are useful or expedient, and necessary only in a lower degree: wherefore the warmth of our Zeal shou'd be proportion'd to the value and importance of the things themselves. All things therefore in religion shou'd not be pursu'd with an equal degree of Zeal; prudence, discretion, and a sound Judgment shou'd interpose to raise or lower our Zeal, in proportion to the worth of its object. But a partial disproportion'd Zeal dwells on smaller matters, and sometimes on trifles, with the same or greater warmth and violence than on the most necessary articles or duties of religion. Different forms of church polity, different creeds and confessions, and human schemes of divine truth, different rites and usages in religious matters, appear, at first sight, to be but lesser matters of the law, when compar'd with faith and repentance and a pious life, which are the essentials and soul of religion; and yet what division and schism, what clamour and outcry, what abusive language, to the destruction of christian charity, nay, what real wars and bloodshed have there been about these things? 'tis impossible that men cou'd contend with greater earnestness for the weightier matters of the law, than for this *tyth of mint, anise, and cummin*.

No doubt but whatever appears to us, after a strict and impartial enquiry, to be a divine truth, ought to be defended, proved, and supported; but surely not with equal warmth and Zeal as the necessary points of religion. And this difference of the value or importance of things should be measured, either by the plain declarations of God in his word concerning the necessity of some points of belief or practice to salvation, or by their obvious tendency to promote or hinder practical Godliness,

or

or by their plain influence upon the welfare of mankind either in this, or the next world. 2

3dly, THAT is a false and irreligious Zeal which is carried on by mistaken methods, by unlawful and unwarrantable means.

'Tis a known maxim in religion that we must not do evil that good may come of it. The most sacred end can never sanctifie wicked means, and therefore whenever any means are made use of to obtain the ends of Zeal, which contradict any of the plain morals or duties of religion, such methods must be the effects of misguided Zeal. Be our point therefore never so good, or never so weighty, yet if we use any unlawful arts for the gaining of it, that is to say, if we do any thing which is in it self evil, and appears to be so to the common sense of mankind, or which the laws of our holy religion do forbid; in all such instances we are transgressors, and tho' our cause be very good and our ends very allowable, yet since the means by which we wou'd accomplish those ends are unwarrantable, the whole affair, tho' proceeding from never so much Zeal for God, is very bad. This therefore I take to be a sure mark whereby any man may try and discover the nature of his own, or other peoples Zeal. Religion is a sacred thing, and when that, or any thing appertaining to it, is the subject, men think themselves authoriz'd, and even bound, to defend it in the warmest manner; and so their Zeal is apt to outstrip their judgement and degenerate into passion. This is frequently the case in religious disputes; Zeal is work'd up into a vicious passion, and writings of controversie are stuff'd with scurrility and abusive language; the plain duties of truth and charity, of meekness and forbearance, of justice and candor are set aside, and

the eternal and immutable laws of God are broken under pretence of promoting his glory. These are the effects of a false Zeal; but true Zeal, as it always supposes a right information of judgement as to the matter of it, so likewise it supposes that a man shall act in honest ways, and endeavour to attain his end by lawful means.

4thly, THAT is a false Zeal which is wrong in its end and intention. Some speculative men warmly pursue the discovery of truth purely for the sake of knowledge, and inquire into religious truths, as into mathematical problems, for the mere pleasure they take in the discovery. Others are zealous about religion for worldly ends and interests; they see it expedient for the present to shew a good degree of Zeal for such a party, or such a point or principle, because they see 'tis popular so to do, and the only way to a livelihood, and to secure the applause and good liking of the people. Others are zealous with no other view, but that they may get the better of the person or party they oppose, and promote the interest of the party they are attach'd to, or to gratifie their pride or passion, or any personal quarrel or picque they may have conceived against others. But these are all base and low views; to name 'em is enough to expose them; and nothing can justifie our Zeal unless it be accompanied with a sincere view and intention to bring honour to the name and kingdom of God in the world, by the love of truth and practice of virtue; and happiness to our own souls, or the souls of other men.

I come now to the improvement or application of this discourse. And

FIRST,

FIRST, from what has been said concerning the nature of religious Zeal, we may easily learn a certain rule for the conduct of our Zeal for other peoples salvation; and 'tis this, that it proceed from a sincere inclination and hearty endeavour to instruct the ignorant, to convince gainlayers, and to prevail with them to forsake their errors and vices, and to practise virtue and piety. And whatever methods are made use of, which are either improper to produce this effect, or inconsistent with any of the duties enjoyn'd by true religion, must proceed from a mistaken Zeal, which, tho' it go by the name of a religious Zeal, is really a Zeal for a party and not for religion. Reason, revelation, and the common sense of mankind assure us, that the conscience cannot be moved or convinc'd by any art but the strength of argument and persuasion; nor the inclination and affections gain'd but by methods of justice, righteousness, mercy, and mildness; and therefore a Zeal to propagate even divine truths by any other method cannot be a Zeal guided by reason and the word of God: for reason teaches us that force has no power over the mind; that it may produce hypocrisie, but never true religion. And from the scripture we learn, that the same *St. Paul* who while he was a Jew persecuted the christians, after his conversion taught his disciples to convince gainlayers in the spirit of meekness.

2dly, FROM what has been said it plainly follows, that ministers of the gospel, whether they are discoursing of doctrine or duty, ought to take special care that their Zeal prompt them not to impose any thing on their hearers, either as a matter of faith or practice, but what their Lord and master has imposed. These are the limits of the
com-

commission which Christ gave to the first minister^s of the gospel, *Mat. xxviii.* and last, *Go, teach all nations whatsoever I have commanded you.* He has not given to his ministers whether separate in their single congregations, or united in synods or assemblies, the least degree of power to appoint one new article of faith, nor to enjoin any new sort of devotion or practice, nor to impose any form or ceremony of worship, but what he himself has framed and enjoyn'd. And yet, to our universal reproach, there is scarce any party of Christians but hath been too zealous to impose some doctrines upon the belief of their proselytes which Christ has not imposed, or to require some practices which Christ has not required. 'Tis this assuming power that has turned christianity into an hundred shapes, and every one of them in some degree unlike the glorious gospel; 'tis this has brought in all the superstitions and fooleries, the splendid vanities, and useless austerities of the *Greek* and *Roman* churches; and 'tis this that has too far corrupted the purity, and defac'd the beauty of most of those churches who boast of reformation, and wear the protestant name.

Now to prevent or cure such a blind Zeal, it ought to be remembred, that this imposing spirit has generally found it necessary to support its commands with penalties and persecutions. Hence proceed the imprisonments, the cruelties, the wild and bloody fury that has ravag'd the nations of christendom, and cast a foul and lasting blot and infamy upon the religion of the blessed Jesus. If we examine the persecuting laws and edicts that have been framed and executed in great *Britain*, and in foreign nations, in ancient or later times, we shall seldom find that the plain and explicit doc-

doctrines or duties of the gospel have been guarded by these terrors. But 'tis the wretched invention of men, 'tis the absolute determination of men upon some points which Christ has not thought fit plainly to determine, 'tis some form of pretended orthodoxy which the word of God has not made necessary to our faith, 'tis some ceremony or mode of worship which Christ and his apostles never commanded, which have had the honour, shall I say, or the infamy rather, to be thus guarded with bloody severities and punishments. 'Tis this corrupt mixture of human opinions, and forms of divine service, that has so disguised the pure religion of the gospel, as to tempt the Deist to renounce it entirely. The pure religion of Jesus has divine charms in it, and is, like the author, altogether lovely; but when 'tis corrupted and debased by new mysteries invented to overload the christian faith; when it is encumber'd by new rites of worship, or imposed rules or requirements of men, which Jesus Christ has not enjoyn'd; when men make new articles of faith which are no where plainly revealed, new terms of christian or ministerial communion no where commanded; when they pronounce that to be a sin which God hath no where forbidden, and that to be a duty which God hath not commanded (which I take to be the very nature of superstition) it casts such a vail of deformity over the beauties of the gospel, that 'tis no wonder if the men of reason start at it, and pronounce against it. While this confus'd mass and medley of things human and divine is held forth, and call'd the religion of Christ, the men of infidelity are tempted to establish themselves in their unbelief, and will hardly give a fair hearing to the pure doctrine of the gospel, because they have

have been so much disgusted with the sight of it in a corrupt and superstitious dress.

BUT then 3dly, in this state of frailty and imperfection dangers attend us on either hand: as we must take heed that we do not add the fancies of men to our divine religion, so we shou'd take equal care that we do not curtail the appointments of Christ. With a sacred vigilance and zeal we shou'd maintain all the plain, express, and necessary articles that we find evidently written in the word of God, and suffer none of them to be lost through our default. The world has been so long impos'd upon by these shameful additions of men to the gospel of Christ that they seem now pretty much dispos'd to bear 'em no longer: but then their Zeal to get rid of these things is likely to run them into another extream; for while they wou'd strip christianity of these false ornaments, and deliver her from these disguises, they are apt in their haste to cut her to the quick, and maim herein her vital parts. Great care therefore must be taken to maintain pure and uncorrupt christianity, in its primitive simplicity and perfection. But some may say, how is this to be done? You seem to confine us to the methods of meekness, gentleness, patience, and sound argument; must we then sit still, and meekly and patiently see error prevail, and the truth run down? I answer, this I think is to be done in the same way that wise and good men carry on their worldly affairs. They ask God's blessing upon them, they use a regular industry and diligence about them, and then leave the issue to the providence of God. Just so in the defence of truth, and preventing the growth of error, we ought to use such means (and no other) as the word of God and sound reason direct

rect to, and ask his blessing upon our endeavours, and there rest, leaving the event to God; for 'tis he, and not we, that governs the world, and we may be sure he will never thank any man for either speaking or acting wickedly for him.

4thly, FROM what has been said we may infer, that their Zeal must certainly be faulty and misguided, who either on the one hand, out of their high esteem for human reason, speak lowly and meanly of revelation; or they on the other hand, who, out of their high regard for revelation, despise and disparage reason and natural light, and wou'd oppose the one to the other. To imagine reason and revelation at variance with each other, is the like absurdity as supposing the eye to see contrary to what the ear hears, or that God shou'd make one sense or faculty to contradict another. For reason and revelation are the two great lights which God hath given us, the two pillars upon which the christian religion is built; take away either and it falls to the ground. For 1st. reason and the light of nature have a most considerable use in the ministry of the gospel; for tho' the gospel be revealed from heaven, and cou'd never be discovered by all the efforts of human reason, yet 'tis the reason of man that must determine whether the evidence of its divine original be clear and strong; tis reason, or the mind of man, that must judge whether such a doctrine or such a duty be contained in this gospel, or may be justly deduced from it; 'tis the work of human reason to compare one scripture with another, and to find out the true sense of any particular text by this means; and 'tis reason also which must give its sentence, whether a doctrine, which is pretended to be contained in scripture,

ture, be agreeable to the nature and perfections of God, and to the eternal and unchangeable reasons and relations of things ; for if it be not, then reason may pronounce that this doctrine is not from God, nor can be given us by divine revelation. These therefore and many more admirable purposes does reason and the light of nature serve, in revelation ; so that 'tis so far from being wrong, that 'tis the duty of ministers at proper seasons to preach and explain the principles of natural religion, as the basis and foundation of all religion revealed ; to enforce the duties of morality, to teach men to govern their appetites and passions by their reason, to bind the rules of virtue on the consciences of men by arguments drawn from reason and the light of nature.

YET in general, 'tis most safe and honourable for a minister of Christ to make the gospel appear to be the reigning principle in his discourses, and to make his hearers see how gloriously it has improved the religion of nature. We must not therefore forget that we are ministers of Christ, imploy'd to publish to men what God has revealed by his prophets and apostles and by his Son Jesus, and not heathen philosophers, to teach the people merely what the light of nature unassisted can search out. We are teachers in the School of Christ, and preachers of the New Testament, whose business it is to insist more at large on the peculiar doctrines of christianity for the honour of our Saviour, and the good of souls ; for this reason they are so largely insisted on by the holy writers, those noble patterns of our ministry. Those illustrious doctrines are big with a thousand duties both to God and man ; all the practices of faith and love,

love, of repentance and universal holiness, flow from them by plain and easie deduction. We preach the gospel in a very defective manner, if we neglect either these doctrines, or the moral and divine duties that are deducible from them.

5thly, THE description that has been given of Zeal shews us, how dangerous a thing it is in the weak and ignorant sort of people; and how wicked a thing it is in any man to be an instrument of setting such people on to do mischief. Zeal is an edge-tool which children in understanding should not meddle much with, and yet it most frequently possesses the weakest minds; and commonly by how much less knowing people are, by so much the more zealous they are; whereas ignorance is no more fit to be the handmaid of Zeal, than it is to be the mother of devotion. Zeal is only fit for wise men, and even in their hands is to be govern'd and kept in with a strick rein, otherwise 'twill transport them to the doing of undue and irregular things. *Moses*, one of the meekest and best of men, and most likely to govern and manage his Zeal as he ought, yet was so surpriz'd, upon a sudden occasion, that in a fit of Zeal he let fall the two tables of the law which he had but just received from God, and dash't them in pieces; a true emblem of ungovern'd Zeal, in the transport of which even good men themselves are apt to forget the laws of God, and to break the obligations of natural and moral duties.

6thly, OUR Zeal ought always to be temper'd with a due mixture of moderation. For 'tis a great mistake to imagine that zeal and moderation are opposites and strangers to each other; for, if we consider it aright, what is zeal? 'tis not a sudden impetus or fury, or the mere effect of rage or fren-

zy ; but it is a rational affectionate concern for God's honour and service, deliberately taken up, upon solid and well examin'd grounds, and prudently carried on, and express'd in a decent and fitting manner. And on the other hand, what is moderation? 'Tis not a lukewarm indifference in matters of religion ; 'tis not a looseness or latitude of opinion, or a sneaking complaisance to error ; but 'tis an evenness of temper, resulting from a well pois'd judgment and well guided affections, and constantly adhering to the cause of truth and goodness, whatever side of the question it finds them upon, but never foregoing that candor and equity, that meekness and humanity, which are due even to those that are otherwise minded. So that these two are not only consistent, but necessary to each other ; for take away moderation, and zeal is the most furious, ungovernable thing in the world ; and take away zeal, and then moderation degenerates into remissness and supineness, and leaves the soul destitute of resolution and vigor. 'Tis fit therefore, that both should act in conjunction, that neither may miss of its desired effect, nor want its due praise.

BUT again, because exhortations conceiv'd in general terms are not apt to affect much, give me leave, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, to make a more particular application of this doctrine to our selves, and our own past conduct. 'Tis not to be disssembled that our poor dissenting church in this province has (for the space of twenty years and upwards) been rent and torn in pieces by contention and division, by strife and debate, carried on with a very warm and lively zeal ; the visible and melancholy effects and consequences of which are, that *iniquity abounds, and the love of many is become cold ;* Brotherly love, meekness, and moderation, these noble

noble christian virtues, have been in a great measure banish'd, and hatred and animosity, evil speaking, and uncharitableness, these worst of vices, and banes of society, have to our shame succeeded in their room. *This is a lamentation, and shou'd be to us for a lamentation.* The divisions of *Levi* shou'd cause to every one of us great sadness of heart, and inspire us with fervor in our united prayers to the God of peace and concord, that he may heal our breaches that are and have been lamentably wide.

It is not my business at present to enter upon the justification or condemnation of either party, any farther than the account I have been giving of the nature of Zeal true and false, does so; but I look upon it to be my duty, in the station you have been pleas'd to place me, to beseech and exhort every one of my beloved Brethren of the Ministry that have been concern'd in our unhappy disputes, to lay his hand every man upon his heart, and without prejudice or partiality to ask himself; What part have I acted in these divisions, and what has been the nature and quality of my Zeal? Have I carefully and impartially examined into the truth and merit of the points that have been in question, and has a sincere regard to that determin'd me to espouse the side I did? Or has my Zeal been without knowledge, and founded upon a wilful and unexamined attachment to a party, or an opinion? Has the measure of my Zeal been proportion'd to the value and moment of the matter it was employ'd about, or has it spent it self with fury and fierceness in smaller matters?

HAS my view and end in what I have done, and am still a doing, been to honour God, and bring good to man, by endeavouring lawfully to support and propagate, what, upon an impartial inquiry, I take to be the cause of truth and virtue; or have I
been

been influenc'd by a thoughtless attachment to a party, or from a personal prejudice, or ill will to the person or party I oppos'd?

HAVE the means that I have employ'd to attain my end, been lawful and allow'd by the word of God; such as sound reasoning, meekness, patience, and a friendly endeavour to convince and persuade; or have I used fierceness and fury, wrath and wrangling, obloquy and reproach? According, my Brethren, as we can answer to these queries before God and conscience, so may we take either peace or shame to ourselves.

PERMIT me in the next place to address my self in a few words to our christian Brethren the Elders and People that attend on our ministry. My christian Brethren, beware of intemperate Zeal for or against any thing till you have consider'd it well, and are sure you understand the goodness or badness, the truth or falshood of it. Zeal without knowledge, without knowing well that we are right as to the matter, measure, and end of it, is a very dangerous evil, and what the apostle *Paul* severely condemns in his country men the *Jews*. *I bear them record*, says he, *that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*; A blind and ignorant Zeal is commonly seen to be most fiery and forward.

LABOUR to know the duties of your own station from the word of God, and you can never be too zealous in the practice of them; meddle not in things which you do not understand, but keep within your own sphere. Search the scriptures, see with your own eyes, pin not your faith, as the *Papists* do, upon the lieve of your teachers, nor suffer your selves blindly and implicitly to be instigated or prompted by any man to shew your Zeal in any thing, till you are convinc'd from your own Reason
and

and Judgment of the truth or falshood of the thing you are to be zealous about.

GENERALLY speaking you have not had the advantage of education and learning that your teachers have had, nor leisure or opportunities for reading, conversation, and improving your minds with knowledge, as they who make, or at least ought to make, the holy scriptures and things divine the principal object of their study; and therefore you cannot be expected to be such competent Judges in matters of controverſie; which conſideration ſhou'd make you at leaſt very modeſt in thoſe matters, and diffident of your own Judgment till you be very well inform'd of what can be ſaid on both ſides. Beſides, they may have many little diſputes among themſelves, with which you have no immediate concern.

ABOVE all, ſuffer not the party names of ſubſcription and nonſubſcription, new-light or old, to inflame your minds with uncharitableneſs, ill will, or hatred againſt the perſon of any man; for theſe are ungodly practices, and no conſideration whatever can juſtify the indulging of them; they are inconſiſtent with, and eat out the very life of true piety, which conſiſts in the love of God, and love, peace, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness, towards our Brethren.

I MAY venture, I think, without offence to any man, to ſay of ſubſcription, which is only an appointment of men (and has in a great meaſure been the matter of our unhappy debates) what the apoſtle Paul ſaid of circumciſion, which was an ordinance of God; *Circumciſion, ſays he, availeth nothing, and uncircumciſion availeth nothing, but faith which worketh by love*; or, as he elſewhere expreſſes it, *but keeping the commandments of God*; ſo may I ſay, ſubſcription is nothing, and nonſubſcription is nothing, but a holy and virtuous life; for the miniſter that lives ſoberly

berly righteously and godly, preaches well, and is found in the faith, is accepted of God, and justly esteemed by all wise men, whether he subscribes or not; and without these good qualities every thing else signifies just nothing.

IN the last place, and to conclude let us all take care that our Zeal be right in its object and end, and in the manner and degree in which it expresses it-self, and then there's no danger of it's being excessive. We can never exceed in our impartial inquiries into the will of God, nor in the practice of virtue and righteousness. The more zealous we are this way, the better qualify'd we shall be to instruct and establish our hearers in the most important truths of the gospel of Christ, to make them understanding christians, and not bigots and uncharitable. The more zealous we are in ordering our own conversation aright, the greater efficacy we may expect our instructions, admonitions, and reproofs shall have upon those that want them; for these christian offices, these charitable expressions of Zeal, are always best accepted, and most regarded, when they come recommended by a suitable example in ourselves.

OUR Zeal therefore being as it ought to be, we can never be too ardent in the love of God, and of the souls of men; never too active and industrious in his service; never too bold and resolute in a discreet defence of his truth, and in vindication of his laws; we can never be too solicitous in promoting the honour and kingdom of Christ among men, and serving his interests; whose Zeal for our eternal welfare, and for the honor of his Father's laws, brought him into this world of sin and sorrow, and made him become a propitiation for our sins.

F I N I S.

